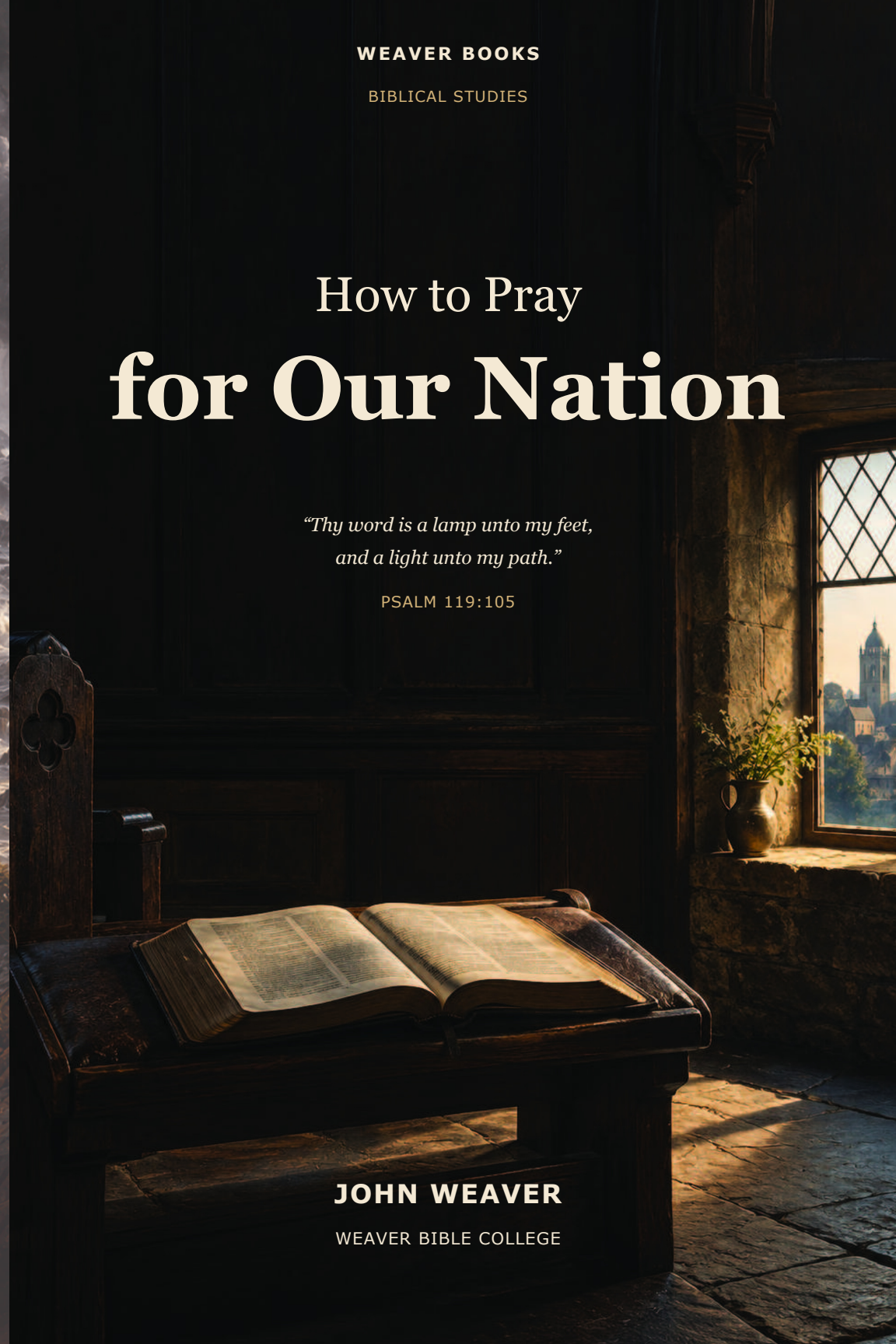
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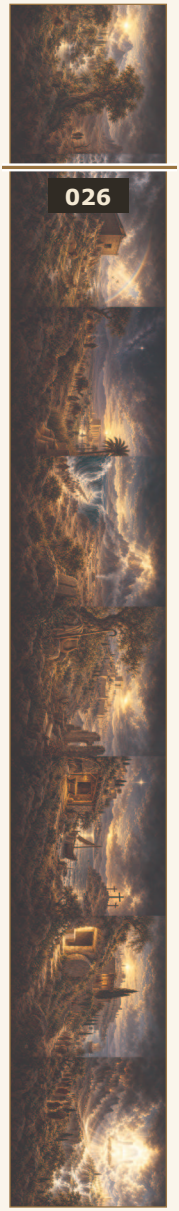
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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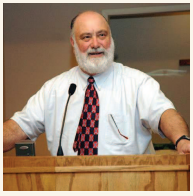
I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting.

DANIEL 9:3, EXCERPT

Prayer for a nation must begin with God's revealed Word. John Weaver examines confession, humility, divine faithfulness, and the responsibility to seek God's honor in public life. Drawing on biblical prayer, these messages distinguish dependence on God from bargaining with Him or placing ultimate trust in political solutions.

"We must ground our prayers upon the Word of God and the Word of God alone."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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Contents

Chapter 1: How to Pray for Our Nation - Part One of Two 5

Introduction: The Need to Learn How to Pray 5

Confessing Sins in Prayer 7

Biblical Requirements for Rulers 8

The Foundation of Daniel's Prayer: The Word of God 11

No Bargaining with God 15

The Fervor of Daniel's Prayer 16

God's Decrees Do Not Excuse Us from Prayer 19

God's Decrees Do Not Excuse Prayer 19

Applications and Call to Fervent Prayer 19

Chapter 2: How to Pray for Our Nation - Part Two of Two 23

Introduction and Review 23

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Faithfulness 26

Covenantal Faithfulness 27

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Failure 32

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Faults 34

How to Pray for Our Nation Today 36

Applications of Daniel's Prayer 37

Applications and Conclusion 37

Topical Index 43

Scripture Index 45

Study Guide Link 49

CHAPTER 1

How to Pray for Our Nation

Part One of Two

Introduction: The Need to Learn How to Pray

We are indeed in a lot of trouble, up to our eyeballs, so to speak. I want to share with you from Daniel chapter 9 how Daniel prayed for his people. He said:

"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."

"And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments."

So how in the world do we pray for our nation? The best way to learn to pray is to emulate and follow biblical examples, especially those examples of praying for our nation. We have that in Daniel chapter 9, and we also have it in the book of Ezra.

Some will object and say, "Well, I don't need to be taught to pray because I know how to pray." Yet when we come to Luke 11:1, the Bible says concerning Jesus Christ, "And as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples came unto him and said, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray, and now the disciples of Jesus Christ are asking Him to teach them to pray. Here is an interesting truth: we must not only be taught to pray; we must also be taught how to pray. Many do not pray at all, and man by nature does not pray. All one has to do is witness the lives of the unsaved.

They do not acknowledge God. They do not thank God. They do not praise God. They certainly do not worship Him. In fact, they live in almost total neglect of God. He is not in their thoughts, plans, or desires. The only time they cry out to Him is when they are in extreme pain, extreme difficulties, or dying.

I would encourage you to re-listen to a message you heard several years ago, "Why God Does Not Answer Most Prayers." In that message, I gave the essentials of praying and answered why God does not answer most prayers. If you go back over it, you will understand how we must be taught to pray.

Prayer is far more than cries, pleas, and petitions. There are certain parts of prayer: adoration and praise. But prayer should become a lifestyle. Once you learn and have been taught to pray, you basically pray continually. Prayer is not just an uttered word. Sometimes prayer is in our thoughts as well, because oftentimes we are constantly praying in our minds, even though we are not uttering words. I have often said that prayer is like breathing.

Sometimes you are very conscious that you are breathing; sometimes you are not. You are just breathing. I am thankful that I do not have to lie awake all night and concentrate on my breathing. I just do it subconsciously. Many times I will be praying in my mind

when my lips are not moving at all. When you are really taught to pray, prayer becomes absolutely natural, necessary, and normal for the child of God. We can pray without even opening our lips. We can pray in our minds as well.

Confessing Sins in Prayer

Now, I want to ask several leading questions to begin with. The first is this: Do you confess your sins in prayer? Before you say yes or no, remember that we all know our sins already have been forgiven—not just our past sins, but our present and future sins as well. When you stop and think about this, and

I've asked this before: How many sins did you commit before Jesus Christ died? The answer is that you did not commit any sins, because you were not even born. Christ, then, not only died for past sin and present sin, but for future sins as well.

You may say, "If our sins are forgiven, why in the world are we confessing them?" I will tell you why. Simply because it is normal and natural in the sense that we understand that we have grieved our heavenly Father. We have insulted Him, violated His word, transgressed His law, and trespassed against His commands. We do that by nature, in the sense that He has taught us to pray.

If you look in your Bibles at Psalm 32, verses 5 and 6, David said, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Then he says this: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."

So he says, everyone that is godly is going to do this. Many times we confess our sins, knowing they have been forgiven, but we are so overwrought because we have grieved and broken the heart of our heavenly Father.

Here is another question: Do you confess the sins of others? You may smile and say, "How can I confess the sins of others? I do not even know their sins." But that is not true. You do know their sins. You may not know specific sins, or the sins they are committing at

this particular time, but you know their sins. The reason you know their sins is because they are basically the same as yours.

In other words, there is still the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. There is a multitude of other things that you face. Remember this verse, 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." What is common to me is common to Steve; what is common to Steve happens to be common to Sharon; what is common to Sharon is common to Dinah; what is common to her is common to Alice; and what is common to her happens to be common to everyone. That is what he said. So we can know the sins of others, generally speaking.

Do you confess the sins of our rulers? How about confessing the sins of our nation? I am sure that there are not only general sins, but specific sins of a nation as well, and these are usually well known to believers. Do you pray for your rulers or powers of the nation? Some people will say, “Of course, I pray for them. I pray that God would remove and destroy the reprobates.” Certainly, there is a place for imprecatory praying. Years ago, I brought forth four messages on praying the imprecatory prayers. Some people say, “I do pray for them. I pray that the Lord will save them.”

Biblical Requirements for Rulers

So let me give you a Scripture truth. The truth of the matter is this: if they are not already saved, if they are not already Christians, they have no business being rulers. That is what the Word of God says. In Deuteronomy 17:15, God says, “Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose.” That is one requirement. The next one is this: “from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.” There should be no foreigner ruling over God’s people, not at all. There would be no atheist, no infidel, no Muslim, and no one except Christians ruling and reigning.

If you check all of the original charters and constitutions of the colonies, you will find that all of them demanded Christian rulers. I am not going to quote any of them today, but I have done that in time past. In verse 16, he said, “But he shall not multiply horses to

himself." His military might is not necessarily going to be in his horses or in his men. "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself."

"That his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel." So God says, look, you're not supposed to have an unbeliever over you.

"Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man that was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Now I want you to note something. David claims direct inspiration from God four times in two verses for this one simple statement. "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me," that's once. "His word was in my tongue," that's twice. "The God of Israel said," that's three times. "The Rock of Israel spake to me," that's four times. Four times, he claims direct inspiration for this sentence: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

How can one be just, ruling in the fear of God, if he is not a believer? Unsaved rulers do not fear God, neither are they, according to Scripture, just. The Hebrew word for justice, or just, and the Hebrew word for righteous are one and the same. Whatever is just is right, and whatever is right is just. Justice is righteousness, and righteousness is justice.

God does require us to pray for our rulers, but there is a specific reason. First Timothy chapter 2 shows that we are also to pray for others: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” Then, “For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.”

We are to pray for kings and for all who are in authority. Why? Not that they might be saved, but that we, God's people, might live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. In other words, we pray that they will leave us alone and let us live our lives and obey God without persecution or problems. If they do not interfere in our lives, we are then more easily able to serve the Lord in whatever manner He leads us.

So we pray not for their benefit, but for ours. We must remember this simple truth: God is able to take away their persons, their power, and their positions at any time He chooses. He may also convert them and save them. But I am simply pointing out the fact that we pray for them so that they would leave us alone.

It is for our benefit. Here is one area in which we can confess not only the sins of our nation, but also the sins of other believers participating in this: we have chosen and elected unsaved and ungodly men to office who do not know the Lord. Consequently, they cannot rule justly or righteously.

Chief Justice John Jay, the very first Supreme Court Justice, appointed by George Washington, said, "Almost all nations have peace or war at the will and pleasure of rulers whom they do not elect and who are not always wise or virtuous. Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."

One of the problems we have today is that the word "Christian" has been literally watered down. We no longer count as a Christian someone who is obedient to Christ and follows Christ. Our Lord said in Luke 6 and verse 46, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things which I say unto you?" Today it has been reduced to

this: if you make a profession of faith or say you are a Christian, you are considered a Christian. The truth is that most Christians have been hornswoggled for so long because everybody says he is a Christian when running for office. Then, after getting into office, they pass all kinds of laws contrary to God and the Bible.

When you are considering Daniel in Daniel chapter 9, Daniel knew that Judah and Jerusalem had sinned grievously. He also knew that Israel had sinned, and that Judah and Jerusalem had ungodly kings, princes, and rulers; he confessed their wickedness.

This is a three-point message, and I am going to cover two points today. Next week will be the last point. I want us to begin with the foundation of Daniel's prayer. Without a biblical foundation, our prayers are useless and selfish. In James chapter 4, verses 1 through 3, God asks, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have

The Foundation of Daniel's Prayer: The Word of God

“Not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” So what is he saying? Unless there is a biblical foundation, prayer is selfish and useless.

Look, first of all, at the foundation of Daniel’s prayer. You will find it in Daniel 9:2: “In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” What books was Daniel reading? We know he was reading the book of Jeremiah because he said so in verse 2. We also know he was reading the books of Moses because he names him as well in verse 11. Daniel was not reading books by false prophets or false teachers. He was reading the Word of God.

He was reading primarily Jeremiah and Moses. Please understand this simple truth: Daniel was a prophet himself. Daniel was also, the Bible says, a man greatly beloved by God. And yet Daniel, who himself was a prophet and beloved by God, studied the Scriptures for

himself. Daniel was a prophet and studied the Scriptures for himself. How much more do we who are not prophets need to study the Scriptures?

In studying the Scriptures, Daniel discovered that the captivity was going to last seventy years. He also discovered that the captivity might be coming to a close. He may not have known the exact day, time, or hour, but he knew that it was close. He got this from the Scriptures, in Jeremiah 25:11–12: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished,"

Jeremiah had said, "That I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." Thus, we know the captivity would last seventy years. Jeremiah 29:10 says, "For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." By reading Jeremiah, Daniel knew that after seventy years the captivity would be over. God had promised to deliver Israel and return them to their land.

Daniel 9 tells us exactly why they were in captivity. In verses 10 through 13, Daniel says, "Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth."

Why did they not pray that they would turn from their iniquities and understand the truth of God? Here is a truth we must grasp: We must ground our prayers upon the Word of God and the Word of God alone. His Word is our foundation. We must know His warnings

as well as His promises. We must lean upon Him and trust in His Word and in His promises. We cannot and must not lean upon or trust in our dreams, our experiences, our feelings, or our emotions. I get so frustrated at times with people who want to tell me about their dreams.

I do not care what your dream is. No matter how good or bad it is, it is a dream. That which must be the foundation upon which we base everything is the Word of God. It is that simple. As you read through Scripture, you will discover that all men and women of faith relied totally upon the promises of God, as well as being moved by the warnings and threatenings of God.

One clear, prominent example is Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Notice: "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear." He understood the warning, believed the warning, and followed God.

I am trying to lay a foundation. There are multitudinous promises in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. But all the promises in the Bible, old or new, are in the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:1 says, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Jesus Christ is the true Son of David, not Solomon. Jesus Christ is the true Son of Abraham, not Isaac. It is true that Solomon and Isaac are referred to in the Old Testament and the New Testament. But there is that which is known as prophetic telescoping. When you read in the Old Testament about Isaac, you need to look forward past Isaac and see the true Isaac, the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to look past Solomon and see the true Solomon, the greater than Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the true Son of David, and He is also the true Son of Abraham.

Now, I want you to follow me very quickly. I want you to look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 15 and verse 8. Romans 15 and verse 8. So look at this. Follow me very quickly. Romans 15 and verse 8, look what the Scripture says concerning Jesus Christ. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." So Jesus

Christ is the one who confirms all the promises. Now turn right over, if you would, to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and look if you would please at verse 20. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 20, the Bible says, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." So all the promises of God in him, Jesus Christ, are yea and in him Amen unto the glory of God by us. Now if you would turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 7 just to show you, when he talks in verse 1 he's actually referring back to all of these promises and especially

the promises in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, but look what he says in verse 1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." In other words, any promise that we claim has to be applied. The promise unapplied is worthless. Now, look in your Bibles to the book of Galatians, chapter 3 and verse 16. Look at this. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians chapter 3, look in verse 16. Now I told you as I began reading or quoting Matthew 1:1, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Look what the Bible says in verse 16 of Galatians 3: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." So the true seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ. The true seed of David is Jesus Christ.

All the promises that God gave to Abraham, we now have in Jesus Christ. The promises that God gave to David we now have in Jesus Christ. Let me show you. Look in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 29. Galatians 3 verse 29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Who is the true seed of Abraham? Jesus Christ. And who is Abraham's seed? Those who are in Jesus Christ. And we're heirs according to the promise. The promise that God gave to Abraham was in Jesus Christ, and we are what? Abraham's seed, only if we are in Jesus Christ. So everything is in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. So there can be, listen to me, no bargaining with God.

No Bargaining with God

I find it absolutely astounding that many professing Christians still think they can bargain with God. I've heard people pray, “Now, Lord, I need this. Lord, I want this. Lord, if You will do this for me, I promise You I will do this for You.” You cannot bargain with God. “If You bless me in this area, Lord, I will do this for You. I'll be obedient. I'll do this. I'll do that.” May I tell you what that is? That is absolute blasphemy. The reason it is absolute blasphemy is that God cannot be bargained with. He is sovereign and the absolute owner of everything and everyone, including you.

Let me say it another way: God does not need you. He does not need your service, your trade, your bargain, or anything. He's God. He does not need you; you need Him. Look back in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 50. I want you to see what God says to these people, to Israel. Beginning with verse 7, God says, “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.” God is testifying against them. He says, “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.” But they weren't. “I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.” Why?

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine." If God were hungry, He would not tell us, for the world is His, and the fulness thereof. Everything is God's. How can we bargain with Him? We cannot. He does not need us; we need Him. Everything we need is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not in us, our works, our promises, or our bargains. It is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember Ephesians 1 and verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Everything is in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the foundation of our prayers must be, first, the person of the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then the written Word of God, the Bible. Everything in our prayers must be based upon Him and His Word.

God has warnings and promises for nations as well as for individuals, families, and churches. We need to learn how to apply

those promises and warnings. Some years ago, I preached five messages from Isaiah on how God destroys nations, giving five things; one of them was economics, and another was politics. You need to listen to those messages, because God has promises and warnings for nations. We are at His disposal, and nations are at His disposal.

I get aggravated at the signs that simply say, "God bless America." America refuses to bless God. We refuse to follow His law, worship Him, thank Him, praise Him, and repent. Somehow we want Him to bless us in our disobedience and wickedness, but He is not going to do it. Read Deuteronomy 28 and 29. God has decreed that curses follow disobedience and blessings follow obedience. David said in Psalm 66 and verse 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He did not say, "If I do iniquity in my heart." If I regard it, if I think highly of it, He will not hear me.

The Fervor of Daniel's Prayer

If just thinking highly of iniquity causes God not to hear our prayers, how much more would He not hear us if we engage in that iniquity? Then He said in Deuteronomy chapter 28, verse 23, “And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.” God said, “I'm not going to listen to you and I'm not going to bless you in your disobedience and your rebellion. I'm just not going to do it.” We must understand the foundation of Daniel's prayer. It had to be based upon the Word of God.

Now look back in Daniel chapter 9 at verse 3. The second point is the fervor of Daniel's prayer—not just its foundation, but its fervor. He said, “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” When Daniel said, “I set my face,” he meant that he purposefully and deliberately sought the Lord. He looked to Him specifically for an answer. He was the only one who could give him the correct answer. Thus, he engaged in a set and formal prayer of earnest devotion, demonstrating his earnestness by fasting and putting on sackcloth and ashes.

Fasting revealed his deep concern for his nation and his people. It oftentimes makes us more alert. When we are willing to forego food

in order to concentrate more directly upon our petitions and supplications, it oftentimes helps. If you get a hunger pain, it should remind you to pray and cry out.

There are three types of fasting in the Bible. Absolute fasting is doing without food and water. You can do without food and water up to three days; beyond three days without water, you are dying. No one should go past three days unless God specifically tells him to. Moses went without food and water while he was on the mount, and Elijah went forty days and nights without food and water. The Bible says that God specifically directed him to do that. The normal fast is doing without food while drinking water, and you can do without food up to forty days.

Some people could probably go eighty or a hundred days, and some of us need to, I can assure you. You can drink water and do without food; it does not bother you at all. If you have ever fasted, you know that after about the third day, you pretty much lose your appetite anyhow. When you start back after forty days, you have to begin with liquids and salads. Build up; you cannot simply gorge yourself. If you do, you will get sick as a dog.

That is a normal fast. There is also a partial fast, and Daniel did this. He said, "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth." In other words, his meat was pulse and water. He ate peas and drank water. It was called a partial fast. He was fasting, and he also put on sackcloth and ashes. The sackcloth and ashes were a visible demonstration of his soul's deep humiliation and repentance.

There are two truths I want to point out in light of this verse. First, we must understand that deep revolt, deep rebellion, and deep afflictions call for deep and solemn humiliation. This is what God says when we realize how desperate we really are.

In Joel chapter 1, beginning with verse 13, we read: "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God." Then He tells us: "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of

the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD." Note that: "and cry unto the LORD."

Then Joel 2:12 says, "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,"

"And of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then, when this is transpiring, then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people." Wow. You're talking about fervor.

The truth of the matter is this: there's no praying like this today. Even in our prayer meetings, we don't pray. There'll be a few prayers said, but there's no real, genuine praying. I will tell you why: we don't have our backs up against the wall as yet. We don't really understand the desperate situation that we're in in this country. We're thinking, well, hey, we're getting a little relief right now and things are going to change. Well, I've got news for you. When you trust in man and in man's work, you're going to fall.

The Scripture says it's better to put confidence in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. It's better to put confidence in the LORD than to put confidence in man. We don't understand or see the desperate situation that we're in, or how far our disobedience and rebellion reach. When we begin to see hundreds of Christians beheaded, as is now going on in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it might change our minds. When we see Christians lined up against the wall and mowed down with machine guns, it might make us want to cry and pray just a little bit more. I'm simply saying that

we haven't been crying to the Lord like that. We have not had the fervor that Daniel has. Here's the

God's Decrees Do Not Excuse Us from Prayer

God's Decrees Do Not Excuse Prayer

God's decrees and promises do not excuse us from our duty in prayer; in reality, they include and require it. Daniel knew that the captivity was going to end in seventy years. He may not have known the exact date or hour, but he knew it was fairly close. Yet he set himself to prayer and fasting with sackcloth and ashes. Just because we know the promise of God does not excuse us from our duties, nor does it stop us from praying. We must pray.

Daniel knew that deliverance was not going to come a day, an hour, or a minute earlier. So he set himself to prayer for the appointed time when God would deliver them. As evidenced in Scripture, his prayer was fervent. His soul was humbled, and his heart was set on the deliverance of his people. It was no cold, dry, dusty prayer. It was not a dead and empty prayer. It was a prayer from his heart—a heart of love and a desire to see the name of God glorified, his people delivered, and the land restored.

We have to have fervor. We have to come to the place where we do not say prayers; we pray. There is a big difference.

So let me make some applications for today. First, do you know the Bible well enough to claim the enunciated promises of God? Do you know where to find those promises in the time of your need and desperation? Do you know how God has promised to destroy and or restore nations? If you do not know these promises, and if you do not know these warnings, how can you pray effectively?

Applications and Call to Fervent Prayer

Look in your Bibles to the book of Job, chapter 12. Right before the book of Psalms is the book of Job. Begin reading with verse 16 and read through verse 25. Look at this, talking about God: "With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He

looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of"

"Darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

God has the power to remove. He has the power to restore. He has the power to destroy. He has the power to create. He has the power to straiten. He has the power to enlarge. What He does is up to Him.

And we must understand all of these promises as well as these warnings. The second application is this: we need also a broken and contrite heart over our sins, over the sins of our people, and over the sins of our leaders. We're never ever going to really pray until there is deep concern or desperation. The very fact that we are refusing to pray as we should means that God in His sovereignty and His all-wise providence may place us in a situation where we have to pray. We will not escape without it.

Jeremiah loved his people. Jeremiah, of course, is known as the weeping prophet. He said in Jeremiah 9 in verse 1, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears,

"that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Jeremiah watched the destruction of Jerusalem. He said in Lamentations 2 in verse 19, "Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thine hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street."

He says, get concerned. Get contrite. Get humbled. Start learning to pray fervently that God would grant us repentance and restoration. Remember, He's the one that can straiten a nation. He can enlarge a nation. He can send revival or He can withhold revival.

He can judge us or He can pardon us. The foundation of Daniel's prayer, the fervor of Daniel's prayer, and the fullness of Daniel's prayer all matter. What really did he say in that prayer? We will look at the fullness of Daniel's prayer, Lord willing.

Father, we are thankful today for the Lord Jesus Christ and for His so great mercy. Lord, we are in such trouble in this country and we don't even realize it. We're hoping things are going to be better, but Lord, we're not hoping in Thee; we're hoping in man. We know that You use men, but Lord, our hope needs to be in Thee. I pray that You would give us direction, that You would teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Lord, we do pray for these on the prayer list that have already been mentioned this morning and this afternoon, that You would indeed work in their hearts. Give us, Lord, Your grace and Your mercy, that we may serve Thee effectively with reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

How to Pray for Our Nation

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

Daniel's prayer teaches us how to pray for our nation. In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign, Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem. He set his face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting in sackcloth and ashes. He prayed unto the Lord his God, made his confession, and said to the Lord, "The great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him and to them that keep his commandments."

We must be taught how to pray. There might be particular petitions and particular supplications in which we must be taught to pray as well. Have you ever been taught to pray for our nation? Have you ever been taught to pray for revival? Have you ever been taught to pray for divine justice? Have you ever been taught to pray the

imprecatory prayers as they are revealed in the Scripture? Certainly there is a place for those imprecatory prayers. In fact, you will find them all in the book of Psalms, as well as in the New Testament and other passages. These are important points in learning how to pray.

The first important point was the foundation of Daniel's prayer. The foundation of his prayer was indeed the Word of God, because he was quoting from Jeremiah, and he was also quoting from Moses as well. Our prayers must be founded and grounded upon the Word of God, which is of course the Word of Truth. Scripture is called the Word of Truth in 2 Corinthians 6:7, Ephesians 1:13, 2 Timothy 2:15, and James 1:18. Everything has to be grounded and founded upon the Scripture.

Hold Daniel 9, and look particularly at 1 John 5:14-15. The Scripture says that this is the confidence we have in him: if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us; and if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." How do we know the will of God? The will of God is revealed in the Word of God. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things which He has revealed belong to us and our children, that we may do them." He is telling us plainly that if we ask anything according to His will, and we know that will is revealed in His Word, then we know that God hears us. If we know that He hears us, we know that we have those petitions that we've desired of Him. It is very important that we ground and found our prayers in the Word of God.

The second thing I pointed out last week was the fervor of Daniel's prayer. Daniel was sincere, genuine, devout, and eager for the will of God to be accomplished in his people and in his nation. Daniel was not praying some cold, indifferent, dusty prayer. No, his soul was on fire, and he eagerly desired to see the end of the captivity of his people and the restoration of the nation that God would go on to bring. He also demonstrated his genuine desire through fasting, as

well as sackcloth and ashes. We could say humiliation. His humiliation was evidenced by putting on sackcloth and ashes. His fasting referred to the fact that he was eager for the Word of God; his prayers were intensified by his hunger.

Every time Daniel felt a hunger pain, it made him cry out even more for God. There are three types of fasting in the Bible. There is the absolute fast, in which one does without water and food, but no more than three days without water. Then there is the normal fast, in which one drinks water and does without food, which can extend to forty days. Finally, there is the partial fast, which Daniel practiced when he said, "I ate no pleasant food or dainties. My meal," he said, "was pulse and water." He ate peas and drank water.

Everything about Daniel's prayer demonstrated his humiliation, brokenness, and contriteness. We do not necessarily have to put on sackcloth and ashes, but we do have to have a broken and contrite heart. David said in Psalm 51:16-17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else I would give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

God is going to listen to and receive a broken and contrite heart. That is what the sackcloth and ashes represented. Isaiah 57:15 says, "For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite ones and revive the heart of the humble."

One thing God requires of us is that we indeed have a broken and contrite heart. Humility comes when we remember who God is and who we are. God is the Father, and we are His children. God is the Creator, and we are the creatures. God is the Lord, the Master, and the Sovereign, and we are the sinners; we are the servants. As children, we may come to our Father asking. As creatures, we may come to our Creator seeking. As sinners, we come to Him begging in humiliation, contriteness, and brokenness.

The third main point is the fullness of Daniel's prayer. When we analyze Daniel's prayer, we see not only its fullness but also the depth of its spirituality.

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Faithfulness

Daniel said in verse 4 that he made his confession. Confessions are not always cast in negative terms; they have positive aspects as well. In Daniel's prayer, we see both a positive and a negative confession. The positive is found in Daniel 9:4: “And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.” The negative follows: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.” The positive relates to God's faithfulness, while the negative refers to the sins of the people.

Daniel's confession therefore shows that confession in prayer is not limited to naming what is wrong. It also declares what is true about God: He is great and dreadful, keeps His covenant, and shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. Then it honestly declares what is true about the people: they have sinned, acted wickedly, rebelled, and departed from God's precepts and judgments. This is the positive confession.

Daniel said, “I made my confession.” The Hebrew word for confession is Yadah. It not only means to confess; it also means to laud and to praise. When one confesses positively, acknowledging God's righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, and goodness, he is also lauding and praising Him, giving Him honor and glory. Negatively, confession acknowledges our sins, the sins of others, the sins of our rulers, and the sins of our people.

These confessions should be characterized by humility and godly sorrow. I mentioned this before, but I am going to mention it again in light of the word confession. In the Greek New Testament, the word for confess is homologeo. We find it in 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Homologeo is made up of two Greek words: homo, meaning one and the same, and lego, meaning “I say.”

Confession of our sins is not simply mouthing them or enunciating them: “Well, I stole from Brother Ron. Lord, please forgive me. Maybe I can get something from Steve next week, too.” A lot of people are eager to confess their sins, but all they do is mouth them.

When you think of the word confess, it is homologeo. It literally means that you say the same exact thing that God says about your sins. It means that you take God’s attitude and see things the way God sees them. If I stole fifty dollars from Brother Ron, then genuinely confessing that sin would also mean repenting of it, because I now see it as God does—as wicked, wrong, vile, hateful, and a violation of His law. If I agree with God, I not only confess to Him; I go back to Brother Ron, ask his forgiveness, and return his fifty dollars plus the restitution God demands, depending on how I stole it and what I did to get it.

In the Bible, restitution is demanded either twofold, fourfold, fivefold, or even sevenfold in some instances. No one ever really confesses his sins until he takes the same attitude God takes concerning those sins.

Daniel does exactly this in chapter 9. Concerning himself, his people, the rulers, their princes, and their kings, he says in verse 8, “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.” Notice the words, “O Lord, to us,” and then, “to our kings, our princes, our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.”

Now look at verse 19: “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive”—and, “O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake. O my God, for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.” Then, in verse 20, he says, “And while I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God.”

Covenantal Faithfulness

Daniel said, "I was confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel." Daniel is making his confession, and I want you to see its

fullness. There are actually three parts to the fullness of this confession. The first is covenantal faithfulness.

Covenants are agreements, usually between a minimum of two individuals, and sometimes many more. When we think of covenants, we can automatically think of the Adamic covenant, the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and also the covenant of grace, or the everlasting covenant. But when Daniel speaks of the covenant here, he is talking particularly about the Sinaitic covenant, the covenant that the children of Israel entered into with God at Mount Sinai.

God gave them His law, His ordinances, and His judgments. In Exodus 24:3, Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments, and the people answered with one voice, saying, "All the words which the Lord has said will we do." Then, in verse 7, Moses took the book of the covenant and read it in the audience of the people. They said, "All that the Lord has said, will we do and be obedient." Notice that the people had agreed to obey God's law.

Someone is going to say, “Well, that’s in the Old Testament.” Let me tell you this: the word covenant and the word testament are interchangeable. You talk about the Old Testament, or the Old Covenant; then you also talk about the New Testament, or the New Covenant. It does not really matter which covenant you are talking about. You have to ask this question: Who was faithful in all the covenants?

The answer is God Himself. Daniel, in Daniel chapter 9, is confessing the covenantal faithfulness of God first and foremost. In verse 4, he says, “And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him and to them that keep his commandments.” Now skip down to verse 12:

“And he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil, for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil has come upon us. Yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God

that we might turn from our iniquities and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us. For the Lord our God is righteous in all of his works which he doeth, for we obeyed not his voice."

We are talking about the faithfulness of God, covenantal faithfulness. Arthur W. Pink made this remark concerning the faithfulness of God, speaking on Psalm 36, verse 5: "What a word is Psalm 36 verse 5. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens and thy faithfulness unto the clouds. Far above all finite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God."

Everything about God is great, vast, and incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, and never forfeits His word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy, the Lord has exactly adhered. Every engagement of covenant or threatening, He will make good. For God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he not said, or hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

The Bible emphasizes the faithfulness of God. God is indeed the faithful God. One of the verses that I memorized years ago was Deuteronomy chapter 7 in verse 9: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." I like 1 Corinthians chapter 1 in verse 9, where he said, "God is faithful, who has called you into the fellowship of his dear Son." Then 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 24 says, "Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it."

Second Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 3 says, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from evil." Have you ever really prayed and asked the Lord to keep you from evil? We pray, "deliver us from evil" in the Lord's Prayer. There was a man in the Old Testament named Jabez. I think you will find it in either 1 Chronicles 4 or 2 Chronicles 4. The Bible says, "But Jabez was more honorable than all of his brethren, and he prayed, 'Lord, I pray that thou would bless me indeed, that thy hand would be upon me, that thou wouldst enlarge my coast and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.'" And the next verse says, "And the Lord granted him his request."

We can ask the Lord to keep us from evil that it might not grieve us. But I would suggest that we also pray and ask the Lord to keep us from evil that we might not grieve Him. In 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 13, the Bible says, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself." Now there is a verse that practically illustrates the faithfulness of God: Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. I want you to listen to it and think about this with me.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will also perform it on the day of Jesus Christ." What are we confident about? That we're going to reach heaven, the presence of God the Father. Once God has begun a work in us, He's not going to drop us or let us fall by the wayside. He is going to continue that work until the Lord Jesus Christ returns, and we will be His. Why are we confident? Because of the faithfulness of God. We're confident that God's going to finish the work which He began in us.

That brings me to another passage, Lamentations 3:22 and 23, which I've quoted many, many times. It says, "It is the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed, because His compassions, they fail not. They're new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." I do love that hymn: "Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, new mercies I see." He goes on to say, "All that I've needed, thy hand hath provided."

When you stop and think about how God gives us life, breath, food, ability, and opportunities to work, everything we have comes from God. Now, God is faithful. Listen to me: He's not only faithful in His promises; He's also faithful in His punishments. Look in Daniel chapter 9, verses 13 and 14: "As it is written in the law of Moses"—just like God said—"all this evil has come upon us. Yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God that we might turn from our iniquities and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us. For the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth, for we obeyed not his voice."

Remember Deuteronomy 28, where you have the blessings and the curses. Verses 1 through 14 are the blessings, and verses 15 through the end of the chapter deal with the curses. In the first part, God says that if we obey Him, all these blessings will overtake us and

come upon us. As long as we are obeying God, His blessings will chase us down, knock us down, and fall all over us. We cannot outrun them.

When you come to the curses, it is the same thing. If you do not obey, all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. These curses will knock you down, chase you down, and fall all over you; you cannot stop them.

With that in mind, and with what we have just read in Daniel 9, look in your Bibles to Zechariah, the next-to-last book in the Old Testament, right before Malachi. In Zechariah chapter 1, beginning with verse 2, we read through verse 6:

"The Lord had been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Turn you unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The Lord says that if you repent and become obedient, God will return to you in blessing, but you have to repent. Verse 4 says:

"Be not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Turn you now from your evil ways and from your evil doings. But they did not hear nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. Then he asked, Your fathers, where are they? The prophets, do they live forever?"

Now look at verse 6: "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?"

"And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." In other words, you cannot outrun the promises of God. You cannot outrun the punishments of God either. The child of God will also have to confess in his chastisement the same thing that David confessed in Psalm 119:75: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in thy faithfulness hast afflicted me." He said, "In your faithfulness, you chastised me. In your faithfulness, you whipped me when I needed a whipping." So God is faithful to His covenant.

He is going to bless those who obey Him, and He is going to curse those who disobey Him. You cannot have blessings with disobedience. The only thing that comes with disobedience is curses. So now we see covenantal faithfulness in this confession, and that covenantal faithfulness is on the part of God.

The second thing to see in Daniel's confession is that Daniel confessed covenantal failure. The failure, of course, was on the part of the people. Daniel 9:5 makes this clear: "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments." Pay close attention to everything that happens when you depart from God's precepts. We have sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly, and rebelled. All of those things are included when we depart from God's precepts.

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Failure

How many times have we as individuals departed from God's precepts? How many times have we as families, as a church, as a society, and as a nation departed from God's precepts? If you want a pretty good idea of that last question, just take a gander at Washington, D.C. Also look at our state capitals and see how we have turned as a nation and as a state from the precepts and principles laid down by our founding fathers. This used to be a Christian nation. That does not mean every individual in that nation is a Christian. It means that it is run by Christian and biblical principles and precepts. We no longer have those principles and precepts.

What we have done today is the same thing that Israel did in the Old Testament. We have departed from God's precepts. We've departed from His principles, and we've transgressed, committed iniquity, sinned, and rebelled. The failure is on our part.

In Daniel 9, verses 7 and 8, Daniel says, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day, to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to all Israel that are near and that are far off through all the countries where thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they've trespassed against thee." Then, in verse 8, he says, "O Lord, to us

belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee."

Note in this passage that Daniel is once again confessing God's righteousness and God's faithfulness. There is no failure on His part. The failure is on the part of the kings, the princes, and the people. We have transgressed God's law; we have trespassed. Therefore, he says, "To us belongs confusion of faces," or confusion of face.

What is confusion of face? I could say, "Well, look at Steve. His face looks confused. He doesn't know which way to go." Well, that's not what we're talking about. The Hebrew word for confusion is the word Bosheth, which means shame. You've seen someone who is ashamed. We call it shamefaced. He drops his head and refuses to look around because he's been caught in his sin and he is shamed. Listen carefully: confusion of face means more than just being shamed, because it is also translated in our Bibles as a shameful thing. What in the world is a shameful thing? Jeremiah 11:13 says, "For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods."

O Judah, they were idolaters. “And according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem, have ye set up altars to that shameful thing”—that Bosheth—“even altars to burn incense to Baal.” In other words, the shameful thing would be Baal. The shameful thing would be an idolatrous altar. So they were shamed. They had confusion of face because they were an idolatrous people.

What we fail to understand is this: when we depart from the principles of God, when we depart from the precepts of God, we always descend into idolatry. You say, “Well, I’m not going after another god. I’m not going after some strange—I don’t know.” No. No, you don’t have to. Whenever you depart from the precepts and principles of the Word of God, what you are doing in essence is dethroning God and enthroning yourself. You are saying to God, “I don’t want Your law. I don’t want Your precepts. I don’t want Your principles. I want my lust. I want my desires. I want what I will. I want my way.” When you reject God’s law, God’s principles, and God’s precepts, it is so that you might establish your own. So whenever you depart from God’s precepts and principles, you are in idolatry. This is why Daniel is confessing covenantal failures: We

have failed. We departed. We are guilty. Now, there is a third thing I want you to see, and that is covenantal faults.

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Faults

Not only covenantal faithfulness and covenantal failures, but now covenantal faults. Let me tell you how I am using the word fault. I could look at Steve and say, “It’s your fault.” Steve could look at Ron and say, “It’s your fault.” Ron could look at Don and say, “It’s your fault.” When we use the term like that, what we are saying is that Steve is responsible, Ron is responsible, and Don is responsible. We are all responsible. If it is someone’s fault, it means that person is responsible. So, in Daniel chapter 9, while he is making this confession, he is saying that everything that has happened to us is our fault. We brought this censure and this judgment upon ourselves. We have failed. We have sinned. We stand condemned.

Here is another instance in which we can see the difference between the faithfulness of God and the faithlessness of men. God, in His faithfulness, always warns His sinning, errant people. He is faithful to His covenant. Hold Daniel 9, and go back to 2 Chronicles chapter 24. Look there at verse 19. In fact, He says very clearly,

"Yet he sent prophets to them to bring them again into the Lord, and they testified against them, but they would not give ear." They would not listen. This is recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 36, beginning with verse 15.

"The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up a time and sending, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place." When God is going to have compassion upon a people, He always sends preachers. He always sends His messengers. But look what happens: "But they"—that is, the people—"mocked the messengers of God"—messengers is plural; there was more than one—"and despised his words"—and his is singular, referring to God's words, because all the messengers were doing was bringing God's words. "So they mocked the messengers of God and despised God's words and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against them, till there was no remedy." God,

in His compassion, sends His men, His messengers, to warn the people: Stop doing this. Do not go this direction.

Now, in Jeremiah chapter 7, beginning with verse 22, notice how plainly this truth is stated. God says, "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, concerning their offerings or sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people, and walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you."

"They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. Yet they hearkened not to me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck, and did worse than their fathers." This is faithfulness. God sent these messengers.

Jeremiah 35:15 says, "I've sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return you now every man from his evil way and amend your doings and go not after other gods to serve them, and you shall dwell in the land which I've given to you and your fathers. But you have not inclined your ear nor hearkened unto me."

So they would not listen. With these verses in mind, look again at Daniel 9:5-6: "We have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land."

We would not listen. We would not hear. I encourage you to read Amos chapter 4. There you will find all the things that God sent upon these people to bring them back to Himself, but they still would not listen. They would not listen to the prophets or the preachers, and they certainly would not listen to His judgment. He said in Amos chapter 4,

“I sent famine, yet ye've not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I sent drought, yet ye've not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I sent pestilence, yet ye've not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I sent war, yet ye've not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” He said, “I've been destroyed some of you as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, yet ye've not returned to me, saith the Lord.” And then he says this: “Because you will not hear, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

How to Pray for Our Nation Today

The Lord God not only sent prophets and preachers; He sent His chastisements and judgments. Judgment after judgment was afflicted upon Israel, yet they would not hear. We are stubborn and rebellious and hard-headed people. There is not much difference between us today and these people in Daniel's time, Jeremiah's time, or Moses' time. We just refuse to listen.

In light of Daniel's confession, how do we pray for our nation today? First of all, we must confess the absolute righteousness and faithfulness of God. Whatever we get into, God is faithful, God is just, and God is righteous.

Secondly, we must confess and acknowledge our own personal sins, trespasses, and transgressions. It would do me no good to try to confess Steve's sins if I am not willing to confess my own sins. Thirdly, we must confess and recognize that we do not deserve the least of God's mercies. Look at the nations in history that have bitten the dust—the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman empires, and all the nations that have gone down the drain. We have violated God's law and do not deserve the least of His mercies.

Fourthly, we must throw ourselves upon the love, mercy, and grace of God and beg for His forgiveness. Daniel confesses this in chapter 9, verse 16: “O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city, Jerusalem, thy holy mountain, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and all thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.” In other words, it is our fault. We accept responsibility.

"Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate." Note the phrase, "for the Lord's sake."

"O my God, incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes and behold our desolations and the city which is called by thy name. For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake. O my God, for thy city and for thy people are called by thy name."

Daniel is saying, "It is not because of our needs, our distress, or our suffering." Yes, we are needy people. Yes, we are distressed and suffering. But he says, "O Lord, hear us for thy name's sake. For thy great name's sake, Lord, do this for thine own sake."

Here are the simple questions that must be asked: Do we wish to be delivered from our distresses and sufferings as a nation, or do we wish to be delivered for God's honor and glory? It is true that we are in need, in distress, and suffering, but that is not the basis. Do we really want to see this nation changed for God's honor and glory, and for the fullness of His kingdom?

Now Ron is a few years older than I am—not much—but he can testify as I can: This nation has changed immensely since I was a boy. If I had known better then, I would probably have said it had changed immensely from a hundred years before that.

Applications of Daniel's Prayer

Applications and Conclusion

Do we wish to be delivered because of the problems that we are facing, or do we wish to be delivered for God's honor and God's glory? Are we just trying to get out of distress and suffering, or are we really and genuinely wanting God to be honored and glorified? Daniel made his confession and said, "We don't deserve to be delivered." He said, "Lord, don't hear this for my righteousness' sake or our righteousness. We don't have any. Just hear it for Your own sake. Do this for Your great name's sake, not for us."

Daniel's supplications were based upon the mercy, grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of God. It was not that the people needed those things; they did need those things. It was not just that they were suffering; they were suffering. It was not just that they were distressed; they were in distress. But he said, "We don't have any righteousness, and we don't have any merit. We don't have any standing before You." Even as saved believers, we still have no standing in and of ourselves. Our standing is in the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that when we come to God in prayer, we do not come to God trying to make bargains with Him. We come to Him based upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, because our standing is in Him.

We have to learn to pray like Daniel. We have nothing, and we do not have any righteousness, merit, or standing of our own. Everything we have is in Jesus Christ. The second thing is this: We must learn to confess and agree with God concerning our sins and our wickedness. We must try to develop the same attitude that God has concerning our sin. Our flesh loves sin. But God says in Jeremiah chapter 44, verse 4, "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending, and saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing, which I hate." God hates sin. If we can ever get to the point where we hate sin, we will be at the point where we really and genuinely love God. You cannot really love God without hating everything that is contrary to Him. True confession is true agreement with God: we learn to hate sin, our sin, the sin of others, and the sin of our rulers.

We learn to hate the sins of our nation. It is only in agreement with Him that we learn to hate sin, which is opposed to God. It is impossible to love Him without hating all that is contrary to Him. Psalm 97:10 says, "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." If you love the Lord, you will hate evil. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride and arrogancy and the evil way and the froward mouth do I hate," says the Lord. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. In Amos 5:15, God says, "Hate the evil and love the good." You cannot love the good without hating the evil.

If we are going to pray for our nation, there has to be a starting point. If you do not start, you will never finish. The journey of a

thousand miles begins with the first step. Therefore, you must determine in your mind and heart that you are willing to confess your sins, the sins of our rulers, and the sins of our nation. We must ask God to do something in us and in our nation for His honor and His glory—not because we need it, though we do; not because we suffer, though we do; not because we are in distress, though we are. We do not deserve anything in and of ourselves. The only thing we deserve is more justice and more judgment.

We need to learn to pray, “Lord, do this for your own sake; for the glory of your great name, for the advancement of your kingdom, for the fulfillment of your word, for the edification of thy people, for the glory of thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, “Lord, do this for your honor and your glory, in the way You have ordained and decreed. Do it for your own sake.” When we reach that point, we can honestly and genuinely say that we are praying for our own nation. But we must start.

I'm afraid—I just wrote a man earlier this morning and answered his letter. I want you to turn in your Bibles one last passage: Psalm 118. You can put a little star by this if you want to. Psalm 118, verse 8. You know what that is? That's the middle verse in the Bible. Look what the middle verse in the Bible says: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” The next verse is very close to it: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” I do not care how good a man is; our confidence should be in the Lord. And I am going to tell you something, folks: man is not going to save us. If we are ever saved, it will be God in His grace and mercy. The Constitution is not going to save us. If we are ever saved, it will be God in His grace and mercy. It is better—better—to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

Let us start by really seeking the Lord for this nation—for our Lord’s sake, for His honor and His glory. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Teach us to pray, O Lord. Teach us to pray for ourselves. Teach us to pray for others. Teach us to pray for our rulers. Teach us to pray for our nation. Teach us, Lord, to pray for Your honor and Your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

This is a sobering message. Let us have one more prayer and remember to pray for each other, and, Lord willing, we will be back next Sunday. Father, help us now as we are dismissed. Thank You for the safe trip and safe travel mercies. Lord, please give it to each one. We ask Your continued blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, whose name we pray. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: How to Pray for Our Nation - Part 1 of 2
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Chapter 2: How to Pray for Our Nation - Part 2 of 2
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Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

Applications and Call to Fervent Prayer p. 19

Applications and Conclusion p. 37

Applications of Daniel’s Prayer p. 37

B

Biblical Requirements for Rulers p. 8

C

Confessing Sins in Prayer p. 7

Covenantal Faithfulness p. 27

G

God's Decrees Do Not Excuse Prayer p. 19

God’s Decrees Do Not Excuse Us from Prayer p. 19

H

How to Pray for Our Nation p. 5

How to Pray for Our Nation - Part 1 of 2 p. 5

How to Pray for Our Nation - Part 2 of 2 p. 23

How to Pray for Our Nation Today p. 36

I

Introduction and Review p. 23

Introduction: The Need to Learn How to Pray p. 5

N

No Bargaining with God p. 15

T

The Fervor of Daniel's Prayer p. 16

The Foundation of Daniel's Prayer: The Word of God p. 11

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Failure p. 32

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Faithfulness p. 26

The Fullness of Daniel's Confession: Covenantal Faults p. 34

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Exodus

Exodus 24:3 p. 28

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 17:15 p. 8

Deuteronomy 28 p. 16, p. 30, p. 31

Deuteronomy 29:29 p. 24

1 Chronicles

1 Chronicles 4 p. 29

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 4 p. 29

Psalm

Psalm 32 p. 7

Psalm 36 p. 29

Psalm 50 p. 15

Psalm 51:16-17 p. 25

Psalm 66 p. 16

Psalm 97:10 p. 38

Psalm 118 p. 39

Psalm 119:75 p. 31

Proverbs

Proverbs 8:13 p. 38

Isaiah

Isaiah 57:15 p. 25

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 9 p. 20

Jeremiah 11:13 p. 33

Jeremiah 25:11-12 p. 12

Jeremiah 29:10 p. 12
Jeremiah 35:15 p. 35

Lamentations

Lamentations 2 p. 20
Lamentations 3:22 p. 30

Daniel

Daniel 9 p. 12, p. 24, p. 31, p. 32, p. 33, p. 34
Daniel 9:2 p. 11
Daniel 9:4 p. 26
Daniel 9:5 p. 32
Daniel 9:5-6 p. 35

Joel

Joel 2:12 p. 18

Amos

Amos 5:15 p. 38

Matthew

Matthew 1:1 p. 13, p. 14

Luke

Luke 6 p. 10, p. 11
Luke 11:1 p. 6

Romans

Romans 15 p. 13, p. 14

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 6:7 p. 24

Galatians

Galatians 3 p. 14

Ephesians

Ephesians 1 p. 15
Ephesians 1:13 p. 24

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:15 p. 24

Hebrews

Hebrews 11:7 p. 13

James

James 1:18 p. 24

1 John

1 John 1:9 p. 26

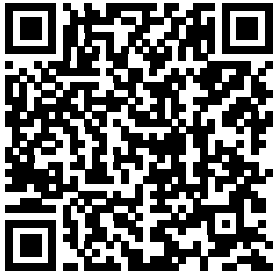
1 John 5:14-15 p. 24

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